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THE CIVIC ASSOCIATION AS A FACTOR OF GREATER LOS ANGELES.

BY MRS. M. BURTON WILLIAMSON.

(Read at a meeting of the Hist. Soc., Feb. 5, 1912.)

We are making history at so rapid a rate we fail to appreciate the value of materials lying waste or becoming destroyed for want of proper recording. It is the historian's pleasure, as well as duty, to properly index some of this rich material for future reference, or, much will be lost to history thro failure to "gather and preserve."

The rise and progress of the various women's clubs in our city has been phenomenal. It was my pleasure, 18 years ago, to be able to collect data relative to the history of all the women's clubs in Los Angeles. Since that volume was edited a large number of other clubs have been organized and a second volume is now in progress for the archives of our historical society.

The paper this evening will give a brief history of a society formed for city betterment, The Civic Association of Los Angeles.

I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Oliver C. Bryant, President of the Civic Association, and Mrs. C. S. Ward, Recording Secretary, for much material and free access to the records of the Association.

The Civic Association is a club containing 24 active committees, the chairman of each committee appointed by the President, each chairman empowered to add to her own committee at her discretion, each committee raising its own funds to carry on the work; this, briefly stated, may give some idea of the plan of work of an association which holds an important place in the city's activities.

This society had its inception Oct. 23, 1899, when Mrs. D. G. Stephens, President of the Los Angeles Orphans' Home Board, and at present, President of the Board of Education of Santa Monica, with Mrs. R. L. Craig, member of the Board of Education of our city, called a meeting of a number of well known women to discuss the question of forming a Civic League in Los Angeles. Besides the following ladies, Mr. Chas. Casset Davis, President of the Board of Education and Mr. Wm. Wincup, member of the Board, were present.

The list of those who responded to the call to meet in the parlors of the Westminster Hotel,* is as follows: Mrs. S. C. Hubbel, Mrs. Chas. N. Flint, Mrs. J. T. Sartori, Mrs. W. J. Washburn, Mrs. W. W. Murphy, Mrs. Allan C. Balch, Mrs. W. H. Hamlin, Mrs. A. L. Danskin, Mrs. Robert N. Bulla, Mrs. J. B. Millard, Mrs. Augustus Hine, Miss A. E. Wadleigh, Mrs. J. W. Hendrick, Mrs. D. M. Meserve, Mrs. E. A. Pickerell, Mrs. Margaret J. Frick, Mrs. J. W. Vancleve, Mrs. A. M. Whitson, Mrs. Geo. A. Caswell, Mrs. Henry T. Lee, Mrs. C. P. Bradfield, Mrs. W. W. Stilson, Mrs. Ella H. Enderlein, Mrs. Sarah H. Longstreth, Mrs. M. E. Threlkeld, Mrs. Geo. Rice, Jr., and Mrs. M. Burton Williamson.

With far-seeing vision, Mrs. D. G. Stephens, as chairman, outlined a plan of work that indicated "coöperation" as the keynote of procedure. "To coöperate with the City Council, Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, Merchants and Manufacturers' Association, Health Office, School Board, Principals and Teachers, Associated Charities, and all other organized bodies in the city, to make this the most beautiful, intellectual, moral and sanitary city in the land; a city where slums may never enter, where it may never be said that its youth are over-educated in books but wanting in practical common sense, a city where moral, physical and industrial training may go hand in hand with mental training."

Mrs. Stephens gave the following as some of the needs of the hour: "Improving schools, visiting schools, arranging for suitable luncheon for school children, visiting charitable institutions, visiting city and county jails, visiting parks and encouraging their improvement, encouraging manual training, instituting free baths, starting traveling libraries, opening public playgrounds, assisting in municipal reform and urging the legislature to pass helpful enactments toward the accomplishment of various reforms."

As Mrs. Stephens' plan of work indicated, the League was formed for a very active campaign along civic lines.

It soon became apparent that public sentiment stood back of the society, which, during its dozen years of activity, has been a powerful agent in civic reforms. Mrs. D. G. Stephens and Mrs. Allan C. Balch were chairman and secretary until a permanent organization was formed with Mrs. R. L. Craig as President, Mrs. D. G. Stephens, First Vice-President, Mr. W. H. Housh, Principal of Los Angeles High School, Second Vice-President, Miss A. M. Davis, Recording Secretary, Mrs. W. J. Washburn, Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Frank W. Gibson, Treasurer, Mrs. H. A. Hamlin, Auditor, and Prof. J. M. McPherron, Financial Secretary.

* Meetings were also held at the Nadeau Hotel.

When we see the vast school system of our city today it is hard to realize that only a dozen years ago the needs of the schools were so urgent that the first work of the Civic League was in connection with the public schools in having the buildings cleaned, tinted and decorated. The attention of the Board of Education being called to the needs of the various schools, and, when the Board could not undertake the work it was taken up by the committees of the League.

The report of Mrs. Sumner P. Hunt of the Decorating Committee gives some idea of the work of the school committees. Mrs. Hunt reported for the Amelia Street school, that the Board of Education had been asked to, "put up picture molding in some of the rooms, a shelf in the reading room and to tint the blackboards green." These requests had been granted. The committee acting for the Ebell Club had furnished the school with 72 pictures. Curtains, burlaps for a background, casts, etc., had also been supplied. At one time 200 hanging baskets were furnished the schools by the committee. The Park Commission, at the request of the committee supplied all the halls of the schools with decorative plants.

A circulating art cabinet, with Mrs. W. H. Housh as chairman, was most effective in cultivating a taste for art in the schools. The Ruskin Art Club very ably assisted the League in procuring pictures, among them a flower piece by Miss Edith White and an autumn scene by Mr. Elmer Wachtel.

Besides those mentioned the following ladies, as chairmen, were unremitting in their efforts to beautify the various schools: Mrs. W. J. Washburn, Mrs. A. N. Davidson, Mrs. W. W. Stilson, Mrs. Augustus Hine, Mrs. L. H. Meserve, Mrs. Margaret Frick, Mrs. Frank Prior, Mrs. J. D. Gibbs, Mrs. E. T. Pettigrew, Mrs. I. L. Hibbard, Mrs. S. K. Lindley, Mrs. F. C. Potter, and Miss M. E. Abbott. At a later period other names were added to the list.

Coöperation between the League and teachers was apparent in some of the requests that came to it. Among others, Miss Joy, of the Custer Street School, stated that a "sand pile for the little children would be of great service."

A number of the principals and teachers of the various schools joined the League and some of them served as members of the Decorative and Improvement Committee in their own schools.

It would be tedious to enumerate the names of all the principals and teachers who aided the efforts of the League, but mention should be made of the coöperation of Miss Rose Hardenburg and Mr. M. C. Bettinger, who were most efficient aids in the betterment of school conditions.

A committee on Course of Study, with Mr. M. C. Bettinger as chairman; Manual Training, Mr. J. H. Francis, chairman; Vacation Schools, Mr. H. A. Pearis, chairman; Domestic Science, Miss Evelyn Stoddart, chairman; School Lunches, Mrs. Margaret Frick, chairman, gives some idea of the work of the League in connection with schools.

Besides the assistance of Mr. Chas. Cassat Davis, President of the Board of Education, and other gentlemen connected with the Los Angeles Public School system, the following gentlemen, as members of the Council and Advisory Committee, were ever ready to assist the League: Mr. Henry W. O'Melveny, Judge Enoch Knight, Judge M. T. Allen, Mr. H. T. Lee, Mr. J. R. Newberry, General H. G. Otis, Mr. W. J. Washburn, Mr. C. D. Willard, Jr., and Mr. Willoughby Rodman.

A committee on Parents and Teachers with Miss Mary Ledyard as chairman, was soon active in the organization of numerous Child Study Circles all over the city. These circles proved to be the nucleus of the state organization of Mothers' Clubs with Mrs. W. W. Murphy as President, followed by Mrs. Chalmers Smith.

The activities of the Civic League did not tarry over schools, but, while joining with other California clubs voicing public sentiment against the destruction of the "Calaveras Grove of big trees." Mr. W. G. Kirckhoff, the commissioner for Yosemite Park, was asked to telegraph to the Hon. R. J. Waters, member of Congress, the action of the League and urge his assistance. The Civic League proceeded to take up the water question. The following letter was addressed to Mr. M. J. Newmark, President of Chamber of Commerce:

Mr. M. J. Newmark, President of the Chamber of Commerce,
Los Angeles.

Dear Sir: The Civic League, organ for the promotion of the general interests of Los Angeles City submits for your consideration the following suggestions: As you are well acquainted with the general history of the controversies, in and out of the courts, regarding the matter of supply and distribution of water to the city's inhabitants, it is unnecessary to recite here that the results thus far have not been entirely satisfactory to either side, and it is commonly understood and asserted that the litigation now in prospect seems practically interminable. The injury likely to result to the city is too well recognized to require extended comment.

"The votes of the city have repeatedly declared by increasing majorities in favor of municipal ownership of a complete water system. The owners of the property required for such a purpose

have declared themselves ready to sell at a fair price. When two individuals are in the same relative position—one owning property which he wishes to sell and the other wishing to buy it—some way is usually found to bring about a trade. It is not the purpose of this communication to lay upon any one the blame for a different result in the water controversy, but to ask your coöperation, with others, in measures calculated to bring about a speedy and equitable adjustment.”

This extract from the circular letter, also addressed to the Board of Trade, the Merchants and Manufacturers’ Association and other bodies, not only shows the activity of the Civic League but gives us a little glimpse of the feeling, at that time, on the water question. With the magnificent water system of the Owen’s River project in sight as a municipal undertaking this incident furnishes a fine illustration of the rapid rate at which we are making history, for the letter just quoted was written at a called meeting of the League Feb. 24, 1900, and signed by Mrs. D. G. Stephens, Mrs. H. A. Hamlin, Mrs. A. N. Davidson, Mrs. Sarah Longstreth and Mrs. Robert N. Bulla, Mrs. R. L. Craig being President.

The question of the unsightly billboards received early attention, but it was soon found that without State legislation, condemning their presence, but little could be done toward removing them, although there has been some changes for the better. The height of billboards has been lowered to 10 feet and raised 2 feet from the ground. Obscene or objectionable pictures and advertisements removed. The city levies a tax on all billboards.

Although the city prides itself upon having several fine playgrounds, Echo Park, Slauson, Hazard, Dawney and Violet, it was through the efforts of Mrs. Willoughby Rodman and her committee that the mayor and City Council became interested and a playground committee was appointed to equip and maintain public playgrounds.

The League had appointed a chairman on Public Playgrounds as early as December, 1900, but it was not until June, 1905, that playground No. 1 was opened. Through the untiring efforts of Mrs. Willoughby Rodman the five playgrounds were opened in five years.

During the early days of the League the question of issuing bonds for the erection of a Public Library building was discussed by the press and Mrs. Allan C. Balch was appointed chairman of the Library Committee.

The Park and Outdoor Committee with Mrs. Willoughby Rodman as chairman, affiliated itself with the Municipal League in the work of improvement of the city, both Leagues being interested along certain civic lines.

In order to interest the public in the work of the Civic League, free lectures were given by well known speakers. The first one was by Dr. Daniel C. Gilman, President of Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore, Md. Although he and Mrs. Gilman were on their way east he very kindly consented to speak at the Ebell Club House, at that time on Broadway. His topic being "Art in the Cities." Judge Enoch Knight lectured on "Our American Home," at the Church of Unity, on the corner of Third and Hill streets, Charles H. Toll on "Civic Improvement, the Duty of the Citizen," "Reform in Education," Dr. Geo. F. James of the State Normal School, delivered in the assembly room of the Friday Morning Club, "Some Observations on Gardening in Southern California," by Mr. H. W. O'Melveny at the Friday Morning Club House, represent only a small number of the lectures addressed to the public.

In October, 1903, Mrs. W. A. Varcoe, chairman of Law and Order Committee, reported that efforts were making toward the establishment of a Juvenile Court in the city. The name of this committee was changed to the Juvenile Court Committee and active measures towards the establishment of the Juvenile Court was begun. Mrs. J. F. Sartori was made chairman of the committee. The probable expenses was estimated at \$3,500. A circular letter and personal appeals were made to the various women's clubs and other societies and individuals.

Miss Evelyn L. Stoddart secured the old jail as detention home which was soon fitted up for the reception of juveniles.

As members of the committee Mrs. Sartori and Miss Stoddart entered most heartily into the organization of a Juvenile Court in Los Angeles, being ably assisted by the President, Mrs. J. E. Cowles, and the Board of Directors.

Mr. A. C. Dodd was made probation officer and the services of Judge Curtis Wilbur were secured.

For the first two years, with the exception of \$25 from the Shakespear Club of Pasadena, \$150 from the Immanuel Church of Los Angeles, \$100 from a private individual and \$30 from the Charity Ball, the expenses of this court had been borne by contributions from the various women's clubs—\$1000 was received from the Biennial Local Board, it having that amount of surplus on hands.

The Women's Clubs responded most heartily, the Wednesday Morning Club representing a 50 cents per capita tax.

A bill before the Legislature nearly resulted in defeat for the Juvenile Court in Los Angeles, but it was saved from disaster by the timely aid of Mr. W. J. Washburn, who went to Sacramento in behalf of it.

The meetings of the Civic Federation had been held in the Ruskin Art rooms in the Blanchard building, but in December, 1902, they

became permanently located at the Chamber of Commerce. In 1905 the name of the Civic Federation* was changed to Civic Association.

The persistent efforts of the members of the Association in urging one City Council after another to adopt certain measures for the good of the city is well known.

Through the efforts of Mrs. Rodman and her committee Arbor Day was inaugurated and a strong impulse towards tree planting has been the result.

A scholarship fund was begun by three women pledging 50 cents per month if twenty other women would do the same—in this way making it possible for a child, sole support of an incapacitated parent, to attend school—the fund being in lieu of his wages.

Mrs. J. L. McLean, chairman of Garbage Collection, was able to report to the Association on March 1st, 1910, that besides the use of uniform cans for garbage, collectors of such cans would be obliged to go back at least 50 feet for the cans. This garbage question had been one of vital interest to the Association, as the health, as well as the beauty of the city, was greatly in need of better sanitation.

March 17, 1909, a Penny Luncheon Kitchen was opened at the Ann Street school, under the direction of Mrs. N. E. Wilson, 160 children were fed the first day; of this number 23 free tickets were used. This Penny Luncheon became so popular that in February, 1911, Mrs. Wilson, chairman Penny Luncheon Committee, reported that through the efforts of Mrs. Bryant, the Board of Education had built a bungalow at the Castelar School and a new kitchen was opened at this place, 230 children asking for admission the first day—the limit of the room being 150. Mrs. Bryant has most zealously worked for the Castelar Street School penny luncheon, where 150 children have been daily fed soup, bread and sometimes fruit and candy. All the equipments belong to the Civic Association. Food expenses were met by the Association, but the Board of Education assumed the payment of the matron after building the bungalow.

The Association opened a kitchen in Macy Street School, and is now getting ready for a third, through the earnest efforts of Mrs. N. E. Wilson, chairman, Mrs. Oliver C. Bryant and Mrs. C. S. Ward.

Mrs. Phillip G. Hubert, chairman of Moving Picture Committee, with Miss Evelyn Stoddart and Mrs. Oliver C. Bryant, spent some months investigating the moving picture shows and much improvement, such as a censorship of all films before they are shown, eliminating all pictures of immoral nature, etc., also having all the

* The Club was organized as the Civic League—the name being changed to Civic Federation.

lecture rooms light enough to see all around for 20 feet. This censorship board consisted of five persons, one appointed by the mayor, one by the Police Commission, one by the Board of Education, one by the Moving Picture Exhibitors' Association, and one by the Civic Association.

Work in conjunction with the County Forestry Board, to preserve and plant trees along the county highways represent the activity of another committee with Mrs. Bryant as chairman.

Mrs. Bryant, Mrs. Lobinger and Mrs. Rodman were most untiring in their efforts to influence the county, Salt Lake R. R., and City Council in building the Arroyo Seco bridge—from South Pasadena to Garvanza—of concrete with six arches in place of the solid dirt filled one already planned.

Of their further interest in the question of the annexation of the Arroyo Seco when as Mrs. Bryant says, they "talked and talked," to arouse public interest, there has been abundant evidence.

Mrs. A. S. Lobingier has appeared before clubs and societies lecturing, with maps illustrating the fine parkway to be annexed and in this way has been a most potent factor in educating the public in regard to the proposed addition to the city's park area.

During all the years of the organization Mrs. Geo. A. Caswell has served most efficiently as a member of the Council.

Besides the committees referred to in this paper some mention should be made of the good work done by Mrs. E. T. Pettigrew, Mrs. R. J. Waters, Mrs. R. H. Boynton and Miss E. Mosgrove in connection with various reform measures undertaken under the Consumers' League chairmanship; Mrs. Chalmers Smith and Mrs. C. C. Noble in connection with the Parents and Teachers Association; Mrs. Cora Lewis, Committee on Noises, Whistles and Smoke; Mrs. Kanst on Billboards, and Mrs. Harriet Myers on Birds.

Besides Mrs. D. G. Stephens as chairman, the following have served as President of the Civic Association: Mrs. R. L. Craig, Mrs. George H. Wadleigh, Mrs. Josiah Evans Cowles and Mrs. Willoughby Rodman.

The present officers are Mrs. Oliver C. Bryant, President; Mrs. Josiah Evans Cowles, First Vice-President; Mrs. Willoughby Rodman, Second Vice-President; Mrs. Andrew S. Lobingier, Third Vice-President; Mrs. C. S. Ward, Recording Secretary; Miss Florence Mills, Corresponding Secretary, and Mrs. N. E. Wilson, Treasurer.

While working with other societies for civic betterment there are four special lines of work that had their direct origin in the Civic Association: Arbor Day, Public Playgrounds, the Juvenile Court and the Penny Lunch.